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4 senators challenge president on SALT II

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WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

Senate and House supporters of President Reagan plan to stage a bruising political battle in Congress this week in an effort to block a White House initiative to secure what they call a de facto ratification of the SALT II treaty.

Four senators, all supporters of Reagan, sent the president a 2½-page letter on June 27 warning him of the political, strategic and constitutional consequences of his support for the proposal.

The administration strongly backs a joint resolution passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 9, pledging the United States "to refrain from actions which would undercut the SALT I and SALT II agreements provided the Soviet Union shows equal restraint."

The Senate will be asked this week to approve the joint resolution by a simple majority rather than two-thirds, or 67, votes.

A copy of the letter to Reagan from Sens. Jesse Helms, John East, Robert Kasten and Steven Symms, obtained by The Washington Times, implies that the president's backing of the joint resolution amounts to surrender to Soviet nuclear blackmail.

The letter contends "the Soviets have not been showing restraint, according to the Defense Department threat assessments." The four Senate supporters of the president in most other areas also charge Reagan unwittingly is giving his support by "de facto" ratification of SALT II in defiance of the Constitution's treaty-making powers provision.

"The resolution," the letter adds, "would improperly involve the House of Representatives in the inactment and de facto ratification of the SALT II Treaty. A simple majority of the House is all that would be required to pass the resolution. Finally the executive branch's lobbying efforts in support of this resolution in circumvention of the treaty-making powers challenges the separation of powers concept in the U.S. Constitution. Thus the resolution supported by your administration raises profound constitutional questions."

Senate and House opponents of the joint resolution can be expected to cite "fresh and new" violations of SALT II by the Soviets uncovered by the Defense Department and the National Security Agency.

The Times has learned that Ray McCrory, recently fired CIA arms control specialist,

Reagan statements on SALT II Treaty

"I believe the SALT II Treaty should be withdrawn."

May 1980

"SALT II is not strategic arms limitation, it is strategic arms buildup with the Soviets adding a minimum of 3,000 nuclear warheads to their inventory..."

"I believe the Senate should declare that this treaty, fatally flawed as it is, be shelved and the negotiators go back to the table and come up with a treaty which fairly and genuinely reduces the number of strategic nuclear weapons."

Sept. 17, 1979

"I cannot...agree to any treaty, including the SALT II treaty, which, in effect, legitimizes the continuation of a one-sided arms buildup."

Aug. 18, 1980

"I think it's a fatally flawed treaty, and it isn't arms limitation."

Oct. 2, 1980

"There's no belief on my part that the treaty, as it is, could ever be signed by us."

Aug. 5, 1981

"As for existing strategic arms agreements, we will refrain from actions that undercut them so long as the Soviet Union shows equal restraint."

May 31, 1982

According to McCrory, the Soviets have "deployed operationally" in recent months their mobile SS-16 ICBMs at the Plesetsk test range with numbers ranging from 180 to 200. The CIA is reported to have counted only 80 to 90 SS-16s. Despite the disagreement over numbers, however, the operational deployment of the SS-16s would constitute a violation of the SALT II Treaty.

The four Republican senators in their June 27 letter to Reagan also maintain de facto ratification of SALT II by a joint resolution of Congress would mean that the United States would abide by the provisions of the agreement while the Kremlin has publicly stated it would not. "The Soviets would thus have all the benefits of U.S. compliance with SALT

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